

trusted to it as to the sheet anchor of our safety, in the stormy times of conflict with a foreign or domestic foe. We have looked to it with sacred awe, as the palladium of our liberties; and, with all the solemnities of religion, have pledged to each other our lives and fortunes here, and our hopes of happiness hereafter, in its defence and support. Were we mistaken, my countrymen, in attaching this importance to the Constitution of our country? Was our devotion paid to the wretched, inefficient, clumsy contrivance, which this new doctrine would make it? Did we pledge ourselves to the support of an airy nothing—a bubble, that must be blown away by the first breath of disaffection? Was this self-destroying, visionary theory, the work of the profound statesmen, the exalted patriots, to whom the task of constitutional reform was entrusted? Did the name of Washington sanction, did the States deliberately ratify such an anomaly in the history of fundamental legislation? No. We were not mistaken! The letter of this great instrument is free from this radical fault; its language directly contradicts the imputation: its spirit—its evident intent—contradicts it. No; we did not err! Our Constitution does not contain the absurdity of giving power to make laws, and another power to resist them.

The sages, whose memory will always be revered, have given us a practical, and, as they hoped, a permanent constitutional compact. The Father of his country did not affix his revered name to so palpable an absurdity. Nor did the States when they severally ratified it, do so under the impression that a veto on the laws of the United States was reserved to them, or that they could exercise it by implication. Search the debates in all their Conventions—examine the speeches of the most zealous opposers of Federal authority—look at the amendments that were proposed. They are all silent—not a syllable uttered, not a vote given, not a motion made to correct the explicit supremacy given to the laws of the Union over those of the States—or to show that implication, as is now contended, could defeat it. No, we have not erred! The Constitution is still the object of our reverence, the bond of our Union, our defence in danger, the source of our prosperity in peace. It shall descend, as we have received it, uncorrupted by sophistical construction, to our posterity; and the sacrifices of local interest, of State prejudices, of personal animosities, that were made to bring it into existence, will again be patriotically offered for its support.